



How can I help at home?



Top strategies for supporting reluctant talkers.

“What did you do at school today?”

It's the question all parents want answers to but often when parents ask this question to their children, hoping for a golden glimpse into their day, they're often met with a disappointing, “I don't know,” or even, “nothing!”

Here's what may surprise you. Talking about your day with a friend or loved one may feel easy for you, but for young children, it is actually a very demanding task when thinking about language!

So here are some tips to help your child talk about their day at school with you, without it becoming an interview panel for them:

 wait! Let them get home, have a snack, change their clothes and settle down so that they have a chance to get a break first if they don't want to spill the beans straight away.

 follow their lead! A golden rule of speech therapy in general but it works the same here too. If your child wants to talk endlessly about pink doors on the girls toilets and blue doors on the boys toilets, go with it! Show interest in what they're telling you and they might just tell you more. If they tell you about the red trays at lunch time, pay attention to their interest in that too.

 lead by example. Before asking them about their day, tell them about yours. They may just ignore you, but you're demonstrating how to share your thoughts with someone else and also how to sequence all the events together.

 play guessing games - a personal favourite of mine - instead of “what did you have for lunch?” “Who did you play with?” “What did you do?” - make silly guesses, then wait and watch how your child corrects you. “I think you had cereal for lunch!” “I think you played with Grandma at school today!” “I bet you took a train to the moon, didn't you?”

 repeat back what you've heard - another golden rule! When your child tells you something, repeat it back to them. This lets them know



you've listened and you're interested in them and they may actually then tell you more than if you move onto yet another question. "Oh wow, you played on the climbing frame. That sounds great!"

🗨️ say what you see - "I loved seeing your smiley face when I picked you up. It looked like you'd had such a great day." Comments like this are positive but also leave space for your child to respond if they want to.

👂 acknowledge that there's a lot going on! No doubt your child is seeing, hearing and experiencing so many new things within their day and their minds will be busy making sense of it all. If they say, "nothing" you can take the chance to acknowledge what it must feel like for them. "There must be so many new things to do and see. I bet that can make you feel tired!"

👍🗨️ "Can you show me?" Ask your child to give you a thumbs up or a thumbs down, or anything in between, to let you know how their day was. This is a great option for children who find expressive language skills difficult or for those who are just exhausted after a long day. A thumbs up puts a parents' mind at ease and a thumbs down or similar can be an opportunity to talk about emotions, feeling words or school worries and parents can then offer lots of reassurance and cuddles too.

👧👧👧 PLAY! Young children express themselves through play. See what happens if you set up a pretend school or ask your child to be your teacher. You may be surprised what they show you!

🗨️ Most importantly - take the pressure off. Children communicate most when they are happy, relaxed, and motivated to do so.

Which of these will you try?